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ABSTRACT

This report provides brief reflections on the major themes of this conference at which approximately 100 academicians, practitioners, students, and administrators were present. In the opening session, Wilbert J. LeMelle stressed the importance of thinking about a developing world when planning for international educational exchange at the adult level. This theme was reinforced by a panel discussion in which participants shared their personal experiences in the area of international educational exchange. Beverly Cassara stressed that such experiences are not only personally enriching but that they are an important contribution to institutional and national development. This view was reemphasized by Arvonne Fraser, who went on to discuss the importance of women and women's organizations in re-education for development. Marcie Boucouvalas and Robert Graetz each spoke of the need to recognize that interconnectedness is our evolutionary imperative. Linda Morris addressed commonalities from the standpoint of individual growth and maturation. Another important theme of the conference, that of selecting and pursuing a career in international adult education, was addressed in papers by Marie Gadsden, Alfred Van Huyck, Ed Hamilton, Kitty McGee, Charlotte Morgan, Lydia Bond, and Carol Hoare. Yusuf Kassam, Michael Marquardt, James Hoxeng, Linda Forcey, James Votruba, Edmund Gleazer, and John Dale described some models for working in international adult education. (MN)

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The Second National Conference

on

International Adult Education

March 28 & 29, 1985

sponsored by

The Department of Adult Education
University of the District of Columbia
Washington, D.C.

A Summary Report: *Elizabeth A. Olson*

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The Second Annual Conference on International Adult Education

sponsored by
The Department of Adult Education,
University of the District of Columbia

PART I. CONFERENCE CONTENT

Some Reflections

Words of appreciation and written evaluations from those attending the second conference on international adult education sponsored by the University of the District of Columbia were often accompanied by requests for copies of the proceedings. The Department of Adult Education decided to offer a somewhat informal report that would summarize the major elements and direction of conference deliberations. The intention of this paper is to encourage participants to reflect on their own experiences in, and perceptions of the conference, as well as to follow through on ideas generated in the discussions. Persons who did not attend the conference but are interested in international adult education may find in the remarks some information and ideas to complement their own, or that invite pursuing in further study or work.

This report deals primarily not with written papers, but with what was *said* in a gathering of adult educators—academicians, practitioners and students, along with administrators who employ them and other professionals who collaborate with them in study and practice. Approximately one hundred persons attended the conference, and additional numbers were involved in planning, preparation and sponsorship. Speaking for the Department of Adult Education, Dr. Loren F. Goyen, the chairman, said at the close of the conference:

"As this second conference ends, we wish to acknowledge with deep appreciation the contributions that many people have made to its planning and success. The advisory committee, the steering group, our own faculty and graduate students, our coordinator, the presenters and key speakers, the university's administrators and faculty from other universities—formally and informally they have offered ideas, support and specific assistance. Many of them also came as participants, to add the riches of their experience to discussions. So we must also thank all of those who participated in the conference itself. It is through open, personal encounter and conversation that the results we hope for are achieved—in terms of better understanding, expanded knowledge, and the formation or deepening of relationships through which to continue the work and growth of us all."

To clarify the nature and purpose of the conference from the viewpoint of the sponsoring university, we must return to Dr. Goyen:

"Our interest in international adult education has been steadily growing during the past five years. This results in part from our having faculty who have studied and worked overseas, and from having students from other countries enrolled in our graduate program. This university as a whole reflects the character of our city. It is a cross-roads for national and international visitors, many of them on errands of adult learning, which they will share and use back home.

"Our department has undertaken a range of initiatives in international adult education because we have studied the need for better preparation of adult educators for international understanding and work. We have current and potential resources for meeting that need. But part of our reasoning is that we need to build our capacity for both teaching and working internationally, because around the world those who are concerned with the learning and teaching of adults are dealing with very similar issues. There is growing need for mutual understanding, support and planning. Collaboration of adult educators within and among nations must facilitate and complement cooperation among educational systems and non-governmental organizations to share research, cost effective approaches, emerging theory and applications of technology. Our initiatives thus far encompass faculty exchange, student and practitioner visits, conferences and publications; other activities and spin-offs are rapidly emerging."

Some Highlights of Major Presentations

If actively reaching out, through its own discipline and resources, toward better global understanding and cooperation characterizes one aspect of UDC's Department of Adult Education, then it should immediately be noted that most of the major presenters at the conference enthusiastically supported that attitude!

In the opening session of the conference, the Honorable Wilbert J. LeMelle quickly set a framework for thinking about a "developing world." Not only did he describe the common tasks of all nations in terms of continuing political evolution, economic development and social integration, but he emphasized the interdependence of nations in performing these tasks, over varying periods of time. He made a strong case for adult education as necessary for progress in all of these tasks, and recognized vital government interest in the effectiveness of adult education. He urged universities to include, in their preparation of adult educators,

full use of modern technologies as these are found useful and relevant to meeting real needs of educators and communities, and as they can be effectively adapted to specific environments. Dr. LeMelle encouraged American universities to assist with the critical task of preparing adult educators in developing countries. He pleaded especially for the higher education of women on the basis of their already-vital contributions to the national tasks he had defined.

In a panel session featuring faculty of the University of D.C., Empire State College in Buffalo, George Washington University and the University of Nairobi, each of the speakers drew from personal experience to reinforce Mr. LeMelle's messages. They applauded the two-way values of faculty exchange and graduate student study abroad, noting that all faculty abroad continue to be students, as well as instructors. The results of international study and teaching assignments go beyond the individuals on either side of the desk and affect the universities' programming, standards and role in the community and in the field of education.

Dr. Beverly Cassara of U.D.C. stated her belief that such experiences are not only personally enriching, but are an important contribution to institutional and national development. She described several aspects of the international program sponsored by the Department of Adult Education at U.D.C. and offered some suggestions for undertaking similar programs at other universities. Dr. Leonard Nadler of George Washington University challenged the group to do a great deal of self-assessment, as individuals and with their universities, to understand their motivations, abilities and resources, and to be clear in the objectives they seek to achieve through their international programs. Both Kenya and Israel were cited for their universities' achievements in international adult education programs. Greg Giebel, Robert Jordan and George Reche spoke about their personal experiences with respect to the University of Nairobi; Regina Grol-Prokopczyk gave witness to both the reality and potential for professional accomplishment as she discussed the Empire State College program conducted at a university in Israel, and thought it a model that could be both replicated and extended.

All of the members of this panel acknowledged in some way the growing interest on the part of graduate students in adult education in career opportunities in the international field. There is increasing awareness among students of the importance of intercultural communication, especially in the interest of human survival and world peace.

A major force in advocating and supporting

adult education within and among nations has been UNESCO, and it was appropriate in this conference to acknowledge the concern of U.S. educators that their country has found it necessary to withdraw from that division of the United Nations. Dr. Jonathan Davidson, Executive Secretary of the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO, proved an able and enlightening speaker on that issue. He acknowledged problems for the U.S. related to politicization, statist concepts found especially in communications and education, and management and budgetary practices. However, he made clear his own belief and that of many others in and out of government that UNESCO's work is far too important to risk terminating. Some reform measures have been undertaken. He urged the professional community to continue to show interest in UNESCO's purposes and work, and to encourage the process of reform and development of conditions under which the U.S. will decide to rejoin.

Dinner speakers sometimes are faced with an audience that has greater physical than mental digestive interests. However, Arvonne Fraser, currently Senior Fellow at the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, quickly and completely captured the attention of her evening audience. Drawing broadly on her rich background of personal and family experience in public service, both national and international, she presented her convictions in a forceful and often dramatic way, to which the following excerpts can do only partial justice.

"I have a passionate belief in continuing education as a first prerequisite for development—individually, nationally and internationally. I say 'passionate' because it is passion or strong belief that creates political will. And the creation of political will is something we too often overlook. We have had, in this country, a love affair with objectivity, with analysis to the point of non-action. If we are to expand educational opportunities, especially for adults, we all must be moved to action. Both education and development imply action—action for a purpose.

"Secondly, I want to demonstrate in this speech that women and women's organizations are central to the process of re-education for development. The international women's movement and the U.N. Decade for Women (1976-85) could be characterized as a massive adult education process for half the world. But it is this half of the world that also has the most influence on the next, the upcoming generation. So, by recognizing the role that women leaders and women's organizations play in the process of adult education, and by encouraging them in their educational efforts, we link into groups that can help

create the political will for, and be part of educational systems.

"Thirdly, we live in an age when fundamentalism—absolutism—is spreading dangerously. Fundamentalists substitute indoctrination for education, promoting acceptance of information and rules without challenge, a denial of the very process or basis of education. The women's movement and those who are working for expanded educational opportunities, especially for adults, are in direct conflict with the fundamentalists here and abroad, and we need to recognize how basic this confrontation is.

"Development and education both involve thinking, being intellectually involved, promoting growth in individuals and for society as a whole. What we are in is a battle for people's minds and for their wills. Education is a mighty force for freedom, democracy and development."

An entirely different context for supporting international adult education was challengingly presented by Dr. Marcie Boucouvalas of Virginia Polytechnic Institute, Dr. Robert Graetz of the Evolutionary Services Institute of Bethesda, MD, and Linda Morris of Arthur Young, Inc., of Reston, VA. Dr. Boucouvalas said, in part: "One of the most critical issues facing international adult education is the building of a solid foundation for the field, in which individual nations and their cultures are recognized, respected, celebrated, and deeply understood, but only as part of a greater whole—the commonalities that humanity and the human species share. . . .

"Differences separate people; commonalities bind and coalesce. In international adult education we have come a long way in catalyzing the flow of both people and ideas across national and geographic boundaries. We seem to have been fairly successful in learning from each other. It seems timely for us now to undergird these efforts by addressing the transcultural commonalities of the maturing adult as well as the interconnectedness of the globe. . . By better understanding and acting upon these commonalities as the glue that binds us as a human species worldwide, we might begin to lay the foundation for the further unification and growth of international adult education as a field of both study and practice."

In speaking about interconnectedness as our evolutionary imperative, Dr. Graetz began to build on Dr. Boucouvalas' thesis: "The evolutionary perspective shows the emergence of life through a spiral of stages over eons of time, culminating in mankind and our present existence. In the evolutionary development model of the life cycle of man as a species, there is compelling evidence that we have passed the time of rapid growth, have leveled off, and are now at a time of critical change. One scenario for

the future shows us rapidly moving toward extinction. The powerful inertia of present trends moves relentlessly toward our obsolescence. An alternative scenario is that of our potential to embark on a renewal of the growth curve; to make the choice of a new birth.

"Perhaps the difference that will make the difference in our future path lies in our ability to find in our own being the truth of the interconnectedness of life, and to lead others to this understanding. Educators occupy a strategic position in such a task."

Linda Morris tackled commonalities from the standpoint of individual growth and maturation, saying: "We are in a unique moment in our ability to view ourselves as transcultural individuals. Research on the maturation process has indicated that a transcultural pattern of maturing exists. Although cultural differences emphasize different aspects of development, people from different cultures who are judged to be mature use similar processes and sequences to solve life problems. . . If we are more alike than different and if we have more ability than we'd guessed, we are in a far better position as a species to solve the overwhelming problems that besiege the planet. The challenge to us as international adult educators is to develop the perspective and the processes to aid ourselves and our clients in realizing our potential and the planet's future."

Careers in International Adult Education

An important theme of the conference, addressed in a number of concurrent sessions, was that of selecting and pursuing a career in international adult education. In their discussion about "Preparing for a Career in International Adult Education," both Marie Gadsden, Deputy Director of the NAFIO-AID Cooperative Agreement, and Alfred Van Huyck, president and founder of PADCO, emphasized the value of international exposure through work or study before deciding to become an "international professional." Experience in the Peace Corps was said to do much to determine motivation and commitment. It was apparent that both speakers believed in knowing oneself very well before making a career decision. They recognized that needs for assistance are rapidly changing in developing countries, usually in the direction of greater technical expertise and for working with particular target groups with specific needs. Short-term assignments are often involved—hence career "risk takers" tend to find international work easier than those who prefer job stability and security. Real understanding of adult learning and enthusiasm for flexible and innovative teaching approaches were high on the

speakers' list of desired qualities for international adult educators.

A quite different aspect of working internationally was discussed by Ed Hamilton of Howard University, who stated, "Cross-cultural training is an essential educational activity for developing intercultural awareness and sensitivity on the part of American educators preparing for overseas involvement." He shared an interesting model for such training, covering ways to increase awareness and sensitivity, as well as guidance for developing realistic educational plans, and suggestions for skill development. It was apparent that the model could readily be adapted, in content, to meet the needs of individuals coming to work in the U.S. Kitty McKee of the University of Oklahoma (Washington office) reinforced the concepts in Hamilton's model by relating them to the preparation of instructors of immigrants and refugees who come to this country. It may be noted that attention to cross-cultural education has come a long way since the publishing of "The Silent Language." Research, case studies, skills practice and awareness exercises and instruments abound, along with theoretical formulations from many different points of view. Even organizational culture is receiving renewed attention.

A number of speakers addressed the fact that international adult educators may call upon and use many other resource persons and organizations to assist in accomplishing any given set of educational objectives. This was especially emphasized when education of adults was examined in the context of development. An interesting approach was taken by a panel considering the contributions of women to adult education for community health and development. In work, community and family life roles many women in developing countries complement and augment the educative process in non-formal ways. In addition to countless individuals, women's organizations are becoming an active force and participant in educational policy and program formulation and implementation.

Charlotte Morgan of the H.H. Lehman College, CUNY, has studied the influence and involvement of women's organizations in Kenya. Lydia Bond of PAHO has researched and worked with women in health care education and service in Colombia and other countries of Latin America. In her comments about future needs and opportunities for women, Carol Hoare of George Washington University observed: "If (Paulo) Freire has taught us anything, we know from his experience in third world countries that effective learning springs from the people. One must begin with the learner's experience, background, extent of knowledge and, I would add, with the learner's current extent of cognitive development.

Women in less developed countries have a crying need to recognize that they. . . can serve a prime role in the learning and growth needs of the people as those people see them. . . As specialists in adult education we know that the most significant question is 'What is of priority to the people?' "

All speakers and participants in this session repeatedly commented on limitations placed on women in many parts of the world. They agreed that women, especially in less developed countries, should have greater, planned opportunities to express their needs and to develop their talents and skills in order to participate more effectively at all levels of community and organizational work, and to receive due recognition for their contributions being made to education and development. What will be the outcomes of the July, 1985, Nairobi conference that "closes" the international decade devoted to women? And how will the world perceive and utilize the findings? Certainly the roles and work of women in adult education will be reviewed. A challenge to participants in this conference is to listen, respond and build further. . . The work and careers of international adult educators may well be affected, both in terms of individuals considering or preparing for the field, and in terms of changed conditions or opportunities for service and jobs.

The foregoing references to conference presentations concerning the selection and preparation of international adult educators show clearly that much more was on people's minds than any formal curriculum at a university graduate school. At the heart of speakers' concern was the individual functioning in the role of international adult educator. Self-assessment and self-understanding, strength of character and purpose, human relationships, cultural awareness and skills in working with other cultures, willingness to utilize flexibly and creatively the resources of others, and the deepest interest in the needs, wishes and resources of adult learners and their communities—these were perceived as an essential complement to graduate study and the decision to embark on a career in international adult education.

Some Models for Working in International Adult Education

Working inside or outside one's own country in adult education inevitably brings one close to human problems of illiteracy, poverty, unemployment or underemployment, ill health, physical and mental handicaps, language difficulties, family displacement and separation, and many others. Several speakers dealt with these problems, usually in terms of how they impacted educational programming or the preparation of adult educators. Some presenters identified critical, specific objectives of

adult education that might increase the capability of people to deal with, or remove themselves from some problem situations. Human empowerment was often noted as the broad goal within which educational strategies should be formulated.

Some of the core activities of the International Adult Education Council described by Yusuf Kassam on Friday morning were acknowledged by various speakers as adjunctive to teaching/learning programs, whether formal or informal. Frequently recognized were the growing potential of conferences, information exchange, networking and participative research as methodologies useful in attaining the objectives of specific learning programs, and also in achieving needed social change. Better mutual understanding, acceptance of differences in values, perspective and operations—and at least some awareness of tendencies toward "hegemonic thinking" (Phyllis Cunningham's felicitous phrase)—these were presented by various speakers as important outcomes of the above-mentioned modalities.

In some sessions content/process models for adult learning were presented, in an international context, that were structured to assure positive results in terms of change in organizations, communities or broader segments of society by means of follow-through actions of program participants.

One such approach is that of the International Division of the USDA Graduate School, involving the training of selected, international students in management or other job-related activities and skills. As moderator, Michael Marquardt of the International Division of USDA-G.S. had invited several staff members and students to identify critical elements and steps being followed to assure positive learning, a satisfying experience at the school, and supported and reinforced action plans in the back-home job. Planning and follow-up activities between the school and the employer-sponsor, as well as between the student and the sponsor, were seen by program planners as critical elements for the success of the program. Conference participants in this session applauded these features and raised many questions, seeking further information. It was recognized by all panelists that the structuring and nurturing of both individual and institutional relationships throughout the curriculum cycle not only necessitate time and careful effort from administrators and students, but also continuously challenge efforts to improve the learning/follow-up system established. The use in the programs of internationally experienced instructors, often with backgrounds in adult education, enabled conference participants to identify strongly with this model as many of them acknowledged increasing connections of adult educators around

the world with work/career related needs and programs.

Almost at the opposite end of the spectrum of approaches to international education/training programs was the model presented by James Hoxeng of the U.S. Agency for International Development. As an international education specialist, he described the role and functioning of an adult educator based in a community service agency in a developing country. In this kind of setting, the adult educator can work as stimulator, facilitator, encourager and supporter for a broad range of non-formal programs that keep community people with identified learning and change needs and objectives continuously in leadership and control positions. Conference participants themselves experienced something of the process as they learned about use of this model in Ecuador and Lesotho. Activities in problem-analysis, skills development and action for planned change at the community level convinced those who attended Mr. Hoxeng's session that this model was indeed a practical and useful approach.

A third kind of model was presented in a session focused on the "Mounting Interest of Citizens in Peace Making." Linda Forcey and James Votruba of the State University of New York at Binghamton, along with Edmund Gleazer, a widely known international adult educator currently a visiting professor at George Washington University, were convincing in their appeals for response by adult educators to widespread concern for world peace. The proposed Peace Studies Education Center at SUNY, Binghamton, will undoubtedly be a strong force for lifelong learning and a vital link for a sustained effort to involve individuals, university and community in collaborative planning and action related to this worldwide challenge. Some conference participants were fortunate enough not only to hear about this community model, but also to hear John Dale, Director of the Center for the Study and Improvement of Peace Activist Communications, who stirred his audience with a challenge to join in spreading the idea of a world referendum on the subject of peace. His approach, through adult learning, focused on helping people to begin seeing themselves as global agents, i.e., global public citizens empowered emotionally, morally, politically and legally to collaborate directly with people in national governments in the ongoing resolution of our current and future global-level problems.

Looking Ahead

The foregoing sample of conference presentations and discussions does not cover all of the challenges, exchanges and questions raised during the day-and-a-half proceedings. Reports or papers about specific sessions were not always available. However, in one sense a "sampling" of a multi-session conference is representative of what any one participant receives. In another sense, any sampling—or even comprehensive review can only begin to convey the inner meaning of the total experience to individuals. Each person took to the conference his/her own background, needs and expectations, and each person integrated whatever was encountered or heard into his/her thinking and feelings without a great deal of analysis. Perhaps this partial review of the conference will complement participants' reflections and analyses of their experiences. . . and will encourage follow-up study and action. From that perspective, these comments and quotations are also the "unfinished business" of this conference, and hence a significant part of the rationale for the next conference on international adult education. . .

A few references may be made to the evaluation process, which included post-conference questionnaires, some informal conversations, and a number of unsolicited letters. Overall, high praise was given to presenters, planners and participants. There was deep appreciation of opportunities to meet and talk informally with "almost anyone there." Presenters were perceived as warmly receptive to others' ideas and friendly approaches. Especially noted were those presenters who had been able to attend all or most of the conference, and thus were available for informal conversations. One student noted that there were no hierarchical barriers of any kind—"just people who enjoyed each other's company and were interested in their views and experience." Another said, "I think I'm a different person—or maybe I just *feel* like an adult educator—and want to be one!" Several practitioners said that the international focus had some new career implications for them; others found in it the provision of a new and broader perspective for their work—and a means of sensing their being part of a larger professional body and even more vital work.

For some "old adult educator hands" there was also a sense of renewal, and greater awareness of the depth of their own commitment to using their knowledge, philosophy and skills more effectively in their work and community life. Many also acknowledged the value of the learning component of the conference, in terms of new information, insights or discoveries. . .

For those who planned the conference, this kind of feedback showed how much had been given and received during the day and a half. As they thought about the many contributions from other universities, organizations and institutions, they could begin to envision future conferences as an integral part of strategic planning of the international adult education professional community. Perhaps in such coming events it would be possible to reach some consensus, make some statements, and decide on some new courses of action that would respond to the challenges raised in the questions posed by Yusuf Kassam and by Phyllis Cunningham in their respective Friday morning sessions.

It seems appropriate to close this review by citing some of the questions posed by each of these wonderful representatives of international adult education. . .

From Phyllis Cunningham, looking back on what had happened at this conference:

Can we talk about peace and not talk about justice?

Whose theories for development are we using as the base for our discussions?

What do we have, really, to contribute to foreign students? Why are we inviting them to our universities?

Who will benefit from our international involvement?

How can we become counter-hegemonic in our thinking?

What am I, personally, trying to accomplish, and what will I do?

From Yusuf Kassam, reflecting on the tasks of the International Council of Adult Education:

How are we using our intellectual resources to assure human survival?

With whom do we really work?

How do we reach beyond the already converted?

How do we include those with power? the powerless?

How do we support one another?

As we contemplate the relevance to each and all of us of both sets of questions, can we echo Tommy Tompkins and say, "If you don't seriously try to respond to at least some of these questions, no amount of praying will get you anywhere!"

Speakers and Presenters for the Second Conference on International Adult Education

March 28-29, 1985

Keynote Address: "The Relevance of Adult Education to Nation Building"

The Honorable Wilbert J. LeMelle, President, Mercy College

"Transnational and Trans-Cultural Foundations of International Adult Education"

Dr. Marcie Boucouvalas, Virginia Polytechnic Institute

Dr. Robert E. Graetz, Evolutionary Services Institute, Bethesda, MD

Dr. Linda Morris, Arthur Young, Inc., Reston, VA

Dr. John T. Dale, Center for the Study and Improvement of Peace, Takoma Park, MD

"The Work and the Challenges of the International Council for Adult Education"

Dr. Yusuf Kassam, International Council of Adult Education

"What We Said. . . Now, What Will We Do?"

Dr. Phyllis Cunningham, Northern Illinois State University, DeKalb, IL

"Appropriate Involvement of Third World Women in the Design of International Projects"

Ms. Michelle Chisley-Owusu, D.C. Public Schools

Dr. Hilda Kokuhirwu, U.N. Consultant

Dr. Nana Seshibe, Howard University, D.C.

Mr. Gana Pati Ojha, University of Maryland graduate student

"Preparing for a Career in International Adult Education"

Dr. Marie Gadsden, NAFIO-AID Cooperative Agreement

Dr. Alfred D. Van Huyck, Planning and Development Collaborative International, Washington, D.C.

"The Role of Cross-Cultural Training in Preparing American Educators to Work Internationally"

Dr. Edwin Hamilton, Howard University, D.C.

Ms. Kitty McGee, University of Oklahoma, Washington Office

"The United States and UNESCO"

Dr. Jonathan Davidson, U.S. National Commission for UNESCO

"Training International Persons: Attractive and Exciting Programs for the Long and Short Term"

Dr. Michael Marquardt, USDA Graduate School, International Division
Dr. William Twyford, USDA Graduate School
Mr. Robert Washburn, USDA Graduate School
Dr. Tarcizio Quirino, Brazilian Corporation for Agricultural Research
Mr. Sergio Ramagen, Brazilian Agency for Agricultural Research, and doctoral candidate, University of Wisconsin

"Computers in the Workplace"

Dr. Brent W. Poppenhagen, Boston University

"Contributions of Women in Adult Education for Community Health and Development"

Dr. Charlotte T. Morgan, Herbert H. Lehman College, CUNY
Dr. Lydia S. L. Bond, Pan American Health Organization, United Nations
Dr. Carol H. Hoare, George Washington University, D.C.

"University Based Programs in International Adult Education"

Dr. Leonard Nadler, George Washington University, D.C.
Dr. Beverly B. Cassara, University of D.C.
Mr. Greg Giebel, University of D.C.
Ms. Regina Grol-Prokopczk, Empire State College, Buffalo
Mr. Robert T. Jordan, University of D.C.
Mr. George N. Reche, University of Nairobi, Kenya

"Meeting the Needs of the Newly Arrived: Adult Refugees and Immigrant Education"

Mr. Jay Castano, D.C. Public School System
Dr. JoAnn Crandall, Center for Applied Linguistics, D.C.

"The Mounting Interest of Citizens in Peace Making: Implications for Adult Educators"

Dr. Linda Forcey, State University of New York, Binghamton
Dr. James Votruba, State University of New York, Binghamton
Dr. Edmund J. Gleazer, George Washington University and University of Texas

"Linking Community Education to Tangible Gains"

Mr. James Hoxeng, Office of Science and Technology Education, U.S.A.I.D.

Part II. Conference Process

A. Evolution of the Conference Design

The first conference on international adult education, sponsored by the Department of Adult Education, University of the District of Columbia, was held in Washington, D.C. in October, 1983. One of the strongest recommendations made by the 90 participants in that conference was to continue the participative design, in which presenters and participants could share, not only in the clarification and elaboration of information and ideas presented, but also in challenging or supporting, agreeing or disagreeing. That approach, participants commented in their post-conference evaluations, was the only way to assure a mutual deepening of understanding of the issues and what they meant to various professionals and in various settings, as well as a deepening of understanding of one another and of the rapidly growing field of international adult education.

Planners of the second conference quickly decided to keep the participative standard for as many sessions as possible, and they placed greater importance on scheduling opportunities for informal networking. They encouraged potential leaders of both general and concurrent sessions to allow ample time for interaction with participants, and they urged them to attend as much of the conference as possible, to increase opportunities for their input and for interaction with others. The ideal would be a round-table exchange, rather than a one-way flow from experts to learners. . . Expediting this plan was the location chosen for the conference, namely, the UDC Mt. Vernon Campus, where the high-ceilinged, marble halls of the old Carnegie Library would permit everyone to be together much of the time, seldom have to walk more than a few steps to reach a sub-group session, and yet easily find a small area for personal encounter and quiet conversation.

Providing central leadership and coordination for this conference was Mrs. Signe Nelson, an alumna of U.D.C.'s graduate program in adult education and member of the steering committee for the first conference. Her primary focus was on locating human resources for both planning and conducting the conference. Beginning with recruitment of key planners and presenters from the earlier event, she expanded the field for both. Working closely with Dr. Beverly Cassara, she put together a steering committee that was committed to building on the success of the first conference and to "thinking bigger," in terms of planning, participation and subject-matter.

The steering committee had begun its planning by inviting assistance from an ad hoc advisory group recruited from government, universities and the private sector. These advisers had many suggestions, both in and outside its formal get-togethers, for issues to be discussed, as well as for specific individuals who might effectively introduce or report on experiences or research related to the topics being considered. This group also urged a longer-range approach to conference planning, so that a series of conferences, perhaps over a five-year period, could progress through varied aspects of the field of international adult education, and also track some topics or themes over a period of years. This suggestion not only resulted in some presenters from the previous year volunteering to do follow-up presentations for this second conference, but in the steering committee's undertaking a marketing approach that stressed the values of participants' returning from year to year. It was also decided that conference evaluation forms should direct participants' attention primarily to looking ahead.

As offers of leadership for conference sessions came in, along with some enthusiastic responses from tentatively invited speakers, the committee began to identify some major groupings of topics being proposed. There seemed to be two central themes. One dealt with adult educators professionally interested or already identified with international adult education. Who are these people? What triggers their interest and subsequent involvement? In what kinds of settings or situations do they function? How are they prepared and how do they continue to develop professionally? What special instructional resources are available to them, and under what sponsorships? What kinds of financial support and delivery systems are available and effective? How do they learn from each other, and collaborate, within and among nations? The session proposals did not cover these topics comprehensively, but tended to identify some critical issues, trends or unfolding opportunities or problems associated with one or more of them.

The other major clustering of topics dealt with international or global concerns as they had implications for, or directly affected international adult education. These topics included the current predicament of UNESCO, movements toward world peace, the world economy, the rapid growth and spread of high technology, changing roles and status of women, the conditions of immigrants and refugees in various countries, the widespread attention to literacy needs, and the increasing role of national governments in adult education. Remarkably, through a negotiating process between planners and potential presenters, it proved feasible to include many of these con-

cerns in the conference program, sometimes as the major focus of a session, and sometimes in an adjunctive way.

The nature, scope and importance of all of the aforementioned topics in both clusters made it quickly clear to planners of the day-and-a-half conference that none of them could be exhaustively covered—certainly not in any one or two of the 60-to-90-minute sessions being scheduled. Selection and focus of materials or questions thus became critical for leaders, along with deciding on a reasonable spectrum of levels and complexities of presentations that would challenge and meet the expectations of all participants. Fortunately, scheduling twelve concurrent sessions in three time periods permitted considerable individual choice. That leader responsibilities were effectively carried out was later attested to by conferees' evaluations, both in relation to individual sessions and on an overall basis.

Nevertheless, the high level of participant interest and discussion in each session, along with frequent complaints that discussion time was too short, poses an important choice for planners of future conferences. If planning continues to be based on expected attendance by about one hundred active professionals and graduate students, and if carefully designed opportunities are provided for participant involvement and contributions, should the issues and topics be limited, numerically and substantively, to facilitate broader and deeper exploration of those selected, and perhaps to encourage reaching some kinds of consensus or recommendations for follow-up action?

In addition to questions about conference design, the planners realize that the broad subject of international adult education is rapidly increasing in popularity as a part of, or as the core of conferences being planned by universities, professional organizations and coalitions of professionals working internationally in various roles. Within the Washington metropolitan area, is it desirable and feasible to do some collaborative, rather than competitive planning with respect to scheduling, intended target groups, marketing and goals? This may well prove to be an important question to pose to a future advisory committee that is representative of many community institutions, groups and interests.

In the meantime, the conference planners have no other intention than to move forward in gathering data and assessing needs, interest and resources for the third conference on international adult education!

B. Some Reflections on the Conference by a Visiting Professor

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This brief paper offers some reflections on two days' experience at the second conference on International Adult Education. Views expressed therein are partly influenced by the writer's personal orientation, perceptions and experience as an adult educator in Kenya. In a sense, the thoughts are phenomenological views from an outsider. In the same vein, because of involvement in the general planning of the conference and in such specific roles as a panelist in a concurrent session and as chairman for a general session, some reflections of an insider emerge.

As Dewey puts it, real education comes after we have left school; hence the need for adult educators periodically to share their experiences with each other. Three aspects of the conference impressed me most. These were:

(1) volunteerism in pre-conference planning and management
(2) the relaxed process characterizing the conference itself
    - climate setting
    - lively main sessions
    - active group discussions
    - informal exchange and learning during coffee and lunch breaks
(3) participatory management style of conference planners and leaders

Volunteerism in Pre-conference Planning and Management

In most conferences that I have attended or helped to plan, most of the pre-conference planning and organizing is done by officials of the sponsoring agency. Outsiders are rarely involved in the planning process.

In this conference one key strength was the involvement of people from outside the Department of Adult Education faculty. Graduate students, community adult education practitioners, and representatives of government, business, other universities and organizations gave time as volunteers to assist as individuals and to work as a team to formulate conference objectives, suggest topics and themes for the content, nominate possible speakers, and propose various modes of operation. This phenomenon impressed me most.

Process during the Conference

Motivations to attend conferences vary from individual to individual. By and large conferees

greatly value the subject-matter discussed, with a view toward enhancing their professional capabilities and interests. Subject-matter is by no means unimportant; yet inappropriate or ineffective process can easily mar or inhibit the intended learning and other outcomes planned.

One of the significant observable aspects of this conference was the style in which it was managed. The continental breakfasts served both mornings were not only body-building, but powerful climate-setting sessions. People became acquainted with one another, began to anticipate the events of the day, became psychologically ready for active participation. Films dealing with international adult education were shown during breakfast and before the morning's presentations began. As individuals arrived, early, "on time," or late, they were smoothly fitted into the scheme of things through being welcomed at the registration table, offered breakfast, or if too late for that, either coffee or tea, and then were directed to a general session or later, to the concurrent session of their choice. Convenient physical arrangements and the alert and caring attitudes of volunteer assistants helped to bring people together, steer them correctly and easily, and keep things moving smoothly.

Another important aspect of the conference were the participant-oriented presentations of the speakers, along with their obvious interest in the conference itself. Many of them participated in the entire conference; others stayed beyond their own sessions. As a result, their input in their own and other sessions, and during break times, fitted well into the context and spirit of the conference. The length of time for sessions and the conference as a whole seemed appropriate to keep interest high. And the time available during breaks permitted discussions to continue unabated.

Participatory Management

As mentioned earlier, the pre-conference planning sessions were characterized by a participatory approach. As the conference opened, tasks continued to be shared—as much by offering to assist as by asking for help. Appropriate resources were available as soon as the needs arose—in discussions, for logistics, and to provide support or recognition for the contributions of others.

Overall, the success of the conference was due to a variety of factors. Among these were the theme of the conference, the selection of effective presenters and speakers, the efficiency of conference planners, and above all the participatory management style that prevailed from the beginning to the end of the conference.